

Overview of Arizona's Pandemic Communications Plan



"LEADERSHIP FOR A HEALTHY ARIZONA"

Communications Rationale

Strategic communications activities based on scientifically derived risk communications principles.

Effective communication guides the public, the news media, healthcare providers, and other groups in responding appropriately to outbreak situations and complying with public health measures.

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Principles of Risk Communication

- **When health risks are uncertain, people need to know:**
 - **What is known and unknown**
 - **Interim guidance to formulate decisions to help protect their health and the health of others.**
- **Coordination of message development and release of information among federal, state, and local health officials is critical to help avoid confusion that can undermine public trust, raise fear and anxiety, and impede response measures.**

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Principles of Risk Communication

- **Guidance to community members about how to protect themselves and their family members and colleagues is an essential component of crisis management.**
- **Information provided to the public should be technically correct and succinct without seeming patronizing.**
- **Information presented during an influenza pandemic should minimize speculation and avoid over-interpretation of data, overly confident assessments of investigations and control measures.**

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Principles of Risk Communication

- **An influenza pandemic will generate immediate, intense and sustained demand for information from the public, healthcare providers, policy makers, and news media.**
- **Timely and transparent dissemination of accurate information and the progress of the response can build public trust.**

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Communication Goals

- **Describe the integral role of communications.**
- **Provide guidance in developing and implementing communication plans that support an effective public health response and help minimize anxiety, fear, and stigmatization.**
- **Provide well-coordinated and consistent communications.**

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Communication Strategies

- **Provide timely, accurate, consistent, and appropriate information.**
- **Emphasize the rationale and importance of adherence to public health measures that some people may consider intrusive (e.g., quarantine).**
- **Help set realistic expectations of public health and health care systems.**
- **Promptly address rumors, inaccuracies, and misperceptions.**

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Communication Strategies

- **Minimize stigmatization that may occur during a pandemic.**
- **Adapt materials, utilizing information from the Arizona Special Populations Study, for special needs populations (e.g., non-English speaking populations, difficult-to-reach communities, and persons living in institutional settings) receive appropriate information.**
- **Acknowledge the anxiety, distress, and grief that people experience during long-term, major public health events such as pandemics.**

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Communication in the Interpandemic and Pandemic Periods

- **Assess readiness; Review and update of communications plans.**
- **Plan and coordinate emergency communication activities.**
- **Identify and train lead subject-specific spokespersons.**
- **Provide public health communications staff with training on risk communications for use during an influenza pandemic.**

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Communication in the Interpandemic and Pandemic Periods

- **Maintain media lists.**
- **Participate in tabletop exercises and other collaborative exercises.**
- **Address rumors and false reports regarding pandemic influenza threats.**
- **Confirm any contingency contracts needed for communications resources during a pandemic.**

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Communication in the Pandemic Period

- **Contact key community partners and implement frequent update briefings.**
- **Implement and maintain community resources, such as hotlines and websites to respond to local questions.**
- **Utilize Arizona Special Populations Study to tailor communications and key messages to specific local audiences.**
- **Report surveillance information.**

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Communication in the Pandemic Period

- **Coordinate pandemic influenza media messages to ensure consistency with Federal government messages and local/county messages.**
- **Promptly respond to rumors and inaccurate information to minimize concern, social disruption, and stigmatization.**
- **Coordinate state information with federal agencies for inclusion in communications for international information exchange and communication strategies.**

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Special Populations Study

- Adapt materials, utilizing information from the Arizona Special Populations Study, for special needs populations (e.g., non-English speaking populations, difficult-to-reach communities, and persons living in institutional settings) receive appropriate information.

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Thank You.

Copy of the Pandemic
Communications Plan:

http://www.azdhs.gov/pandemicflu/pdf/supp_10_public_health_communications.pdf

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